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INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0828  
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RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 6004  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4343  
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RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8428  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5902  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0611  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2705  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000363

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/08/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: JVP RIFT RESULTS IN SUSPENSION OF  
PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LEADER; SMALL BREAKAWAY FACTION EMERGES

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr., for reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (C) Summary. On April 6, local press reported that the JVP, in a March 21 Central Committee meeting, had decided to suspend Parliamentary Group Leader and Propaganda Secretary Wimal Weerawansa from the party. Weerawansa reportedly upset fellow JVP leaders by publicly contradicting the party's position that the TMVP should be disarmed. On April 8, Weerawansa delivered an emotional speech to parliament, confirming the rumors that he had been suspended. A group of 12 JVP MPs organized a press conference on April 8 to announce their support for him. However, during their announcement, one supposed defector criticized Weerawansa for airing the JVP's internal problems in public. On April 9, JVP leader Amarasinghe denied that the party had suspended Weerawansa. This split in the JVP is a public display of a rift that has been growing in the JVP for some time. Senior party members have long been critical of Weerawansa's continued support for the Rajapaksa government and have accused him of trying to divide the party. End Summary.

#### JVP Suspends Weerawansa

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12. (U) On April 6, local press reported that the JVP, in a March 21 Central Committee meeting, had decided to suspend Parliamentary Group Leader and Propaganda Secretary Wimal Weerawansa from the party. Weerawansa reportedly upset fellow JVP leaders by publicly contradicting the party's position that the TMVP should be disarmed to allow for free and fair provincial council elections in the East. Some reports said he was accused of leaking party information to outsiders. Local press speculated that the decision was being kept quiet until after the May 10 Eastern Provincial Council elections so that Weerawansa could help the JVP campaign.

#### Weerawansa Speaks Out in Parliament

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13. (U) On April 8, Weerawansa delivered an emotional speech to parliament, confirming the rumors that he had been suspended and that Central Committee members had been

instructed not to talk to him. He claimed he never expected the JVP would remove him from the party. He said, "I have spent half my life for the party and I have never done anything to hurt the party. I never thought that the party would discard me like a used toothpick." Weerawansa added that his removal was a conspiracy of "imperialistic forces that have infiltrated the party" and that his removal would only satisfy those imperialists. He accused party leaders of "working to the agenda of outside forces." Weerawansa promised not to attack the party or encourage other members leave, adding "I will urge our members to hold on and try to better the party from the inside."

#### Breakaway Group Hold a Confusing Press Conference

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¶4. (U) A group of 12 JVP MPs organized a press conference on April 8 to announce their support for Weerawansa. Kalutara district parliamentarian Piyasiri Wijenayake identified some of the problems the group sees within the party, including the JVP's inability to carry out its responsibilities because of "pressure from imperialists and conspirators." Anuradhapura District MP Ranaweera Pathirana, supposedly one of the defectors, interrupted Wijenayake to say Weerawansa's speech in parliament had been inappropriate and that any problems should be dealt with internally through discussion with the party leadership. Wijenayake then accused Pathirana and one other MP of disrupting the press conference on the instruction of JVP leader Somawansa Amarasinghe. Wijenayake added that the defectors would reveal in time how certain JVP members were working with other parties to split the JVP, saying "some of our party

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leaders have fallen into their trap." He said the defectors would not join the United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) or the United National Party (UNP), but would take steps to resolve the party's internal problems and strengthen the party, including a change in the party's leadership. Pathirana refused to leave the press conference with the group of MPs and instead was escorted out by a team of police.

#### Party Leadership Reluctant to Comment

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¶5. (U) JVP leaders have said little about recent events. On April 9, JVP leader Amarasinghe said the party has not yet suspended or expelled Weerawansa from the party. He added that no action has been taken on the MPs who have expressed support for Weerawansa. Amarasinghe acknowledged, however, that there are a "plethora of allegations" against Weerawansa, including questionable financial transactions.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: This split in the JVP is a public display of a rift that has been growing in the party for some time. Senior party members have long been critical of Weerawansa's continued support for the Rajapaksa government and have accused him of trying to divide the party. Some say he is beholden to Basil Rajapaksa, who has details of Weerawansa's involvement in corruption. Some reports have suggested that his suspension is part of an exercise by party leader Amarasinghe to sideline Weerawansa, who Amarasinghe sees as a threat, in favor of party front-liner Anura Kumara Disسانayake, who favors distancing the JVP from the government. Some local observers are speculating that this divide in the JVP was orchestrated by the UNP in an attempt to strengthen the opposition's numbers in parliament. UNP Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe told Ambassador on April 9 that some in the JVP are still working to patch things up, but he doubted they would be successful. He predicted the split would further weaken the JVP, particularly the pro-government faction, and that the JVP would now increase its anti-GSL activities.

¶7. (C) Weerawansa's suspension or expulsion would not affect his seat in Parliament. Like all JVP

parliamentarians, he contested on the UPFA ticket. We expect the breakaway group of MPs to support the government, while the remaining 25 will likely increase their criticism of the government on trademark JVP issues such as cost of living and corruption. However, even if the core JVP group now votes consistently against the government, the opposition will not have a majority in parliament. The JVP's disarray and the loss of Weerawansa, one of its best speakers, will make contesting the Eastern Provincial Council elections even more of a challenge for the JVP.

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